

80,000 Hours Six Month Review

June - November 2012

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Outline

The main purpose of this document is to state what we have achieved with our resources in the period June – end November 2012 relative to our stated plans.

The main focus of this period has been establishing 80,000 Hours as a professional organisation with a viable business model. Our focus has not been directly on having an impact through outreach. Currently, we don't have enough data to make any firm remarks about our outreach impact, though some of the more easily trackable metrics show promise.

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Our Main Achievements

Our biggest achievements

- Made a successful transition from being volunteer run to having five full-time staff/volunteers. This required setting up new management processes, office space, HR admin and other systems. Our staff report very high levels of satisfaction and motivation.
- Clarified our concept for 80,000 Hours to one focused on providing evidence-based careers advice
- Implemented and started to test our new concept online and through outreach in Oxford, with successful results e.g. we increased web traffic by 230% and roughly doubled our levels of engagement in Oxford.
- Learned about start-up business strategy and applied this to developing our business model. Wrote a 50 page internal business plan.
- Sampled the main sources of careers advice that our target market uses, and did research on levels of satisfaction with this advice.
- We invested in our content by writing and researching over 60 blog posts, writing 10 pages of web content, laying the ground for more content, and monitoring how this content performed online.

These successes place us in a strong position to execute our strategy in the coming years (as laid out in our Business Plan). For our core product of providing careers advice to ambitious students, that's to (i) further test and refine our business model (ii) build our product (iii) to invest in demand creation (iv) scale up so that we serve our entire target market.

Although not our focus over the period, we appear to have had significant impact through our outreach and through setting up Effective Animal Activism, as covered later.

Our main failings have been

- We could be ahead of schedule if we had focused more on testing, product research and strategy from the start, rather than working as much as we did

on directly recruiting people (although recruiting people had substantial benefits).

- We addressed this by having two major strategy reassessments – one near the end of the summer and one in November – in which we assessed our competitive niche and analysed our success to date.
 - Going forward, we're making sure to include more time for strategy in our plans. We've also designed an iterative product development process where we collect feedback early and use it to constantly adjust our content.
- There is still work to do creating a professional work culture that allows all our staff to live up to their potential in terms of productivity.
 - We partly addressed this by setting up a full-time office, formalising our management processes and adding employee reviews. We can improve this further by securing an even better office and continuing to learn about management. I also expect it to improve naturally over time as we mature as an organisation.
- CEA Central Operations (shared with Giving What We Can) had success in registering CEA as a charity and dealing with all the admin required to take on staff. Sharing the department has saved us months of staff time. Nevertheless, it also had a number of failures, which wasted management attention.
 - We could have anticipated that we needed more cross-CEA communication and clearer delegation of responsibilities to make this shared department work to its full potential. I think these structural factors have been resolved by improving communication and changing the management processes around the Director of Operations.
 - Part of the problem was simple lack of resources, in particular, the Director of Operations was investing significant amounts of time in GWWC, which meant he didn't have enough time to run Ops, but this could have been avoided if GWWC had more resources. We're addressing this by making sure 80k and GWWC are sending enough labour to Ops during our quarterly reviews.

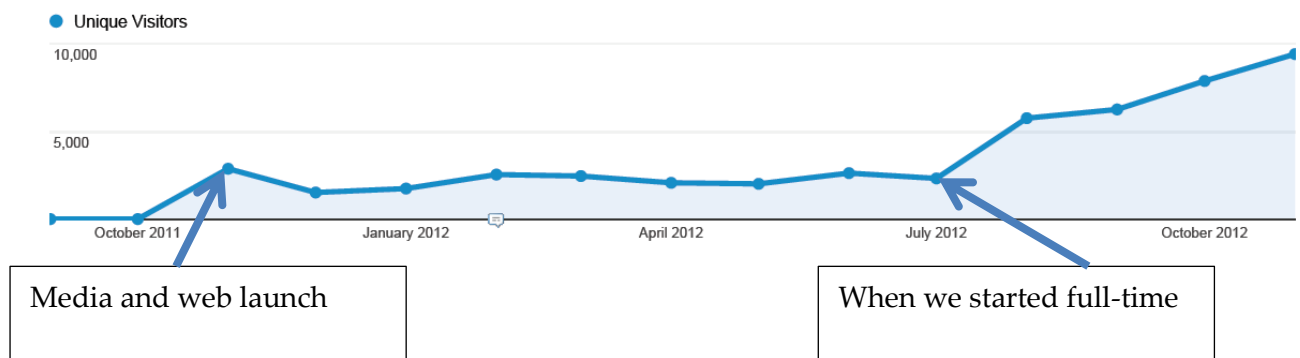
Our Outreach Impact

We were primarily focused on investing in future growth over this period, rather than directly helping people with their careers. What outreach we do is primarily aimed at testing our model. Further, tracking our impact is a significant challenge, which requires much more investment on our side. Nevertheless, there were promising signs in some of the metrics we can easily track that we're having significant impact by helping people have more impact with their careers.

Intermediate metrics

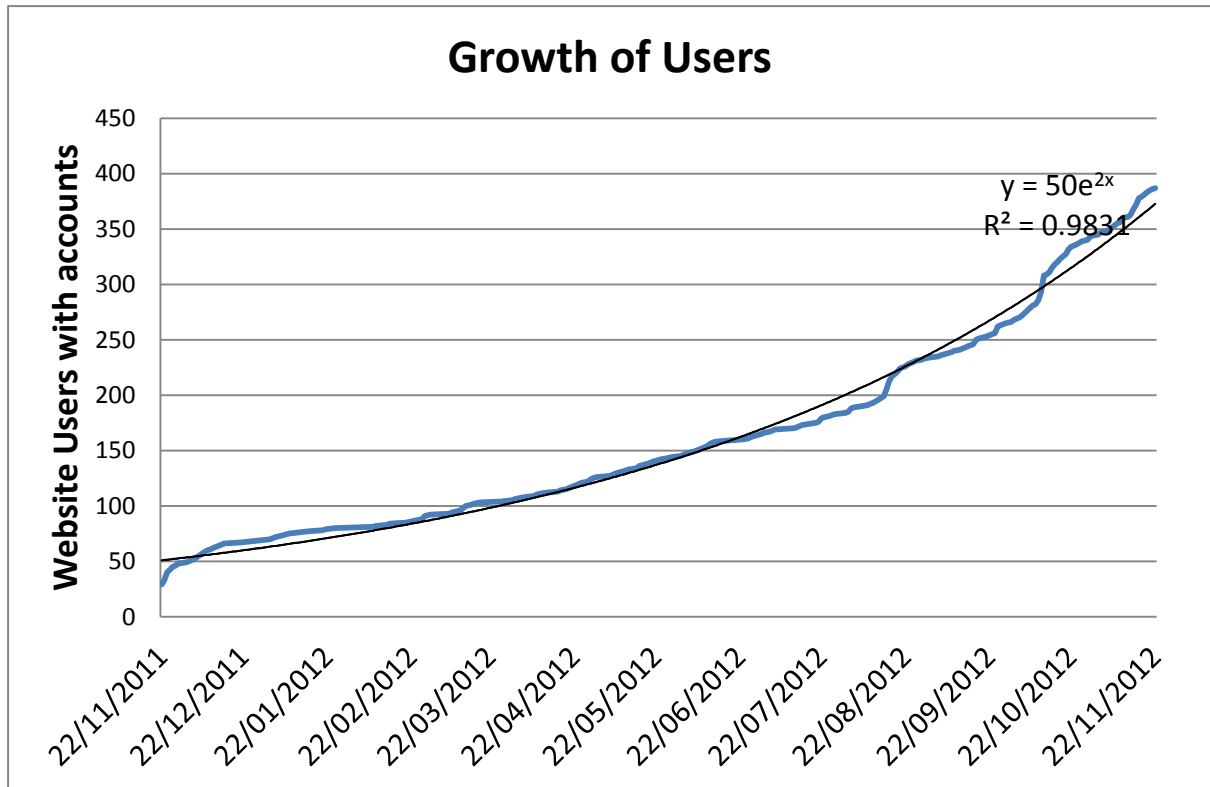
As of 30th Nov:

- Total UV to the website: 45,500
 - Last 6 months: 32,100
 - Last month: 9,500
 - Growing at 4% per week



- Total FB likes: 606
 - Growing at 3% per week
- Total mailing list: 1950
 - Gain over last 6 months: 1350 – mostly from the Oxford fresher's fair
- Members: 265

- Gain over last 6 months: 143
- Growing at 8% per week



- Careers advice sessions since Sept: 37
 - Average 3/week
 - Average 'usefulness' of 74%
- Average % of income pledged over the last 2 months: 8%
 - This is probably being slightly underreported, due to problems with the profile creation step
 - Note that the majority of members are not pledging, but those that do often pledge 30%

Members survey data

Our main data on our new members is from a survey we conducted 17th Sept – 10th Nov on incoming members. 41% (21) responded out of the 51 surveyed, a significant fraction of the 85 new members we gained in this period.

Of these, 33% said they anticipate making a significant or complete career change after discovering us. Assuming non-reporters didn't change their careers, **14% of the new members self-report anticipating significant or complete changes.**

Discarding non-reporters is conservative, because the survey wasn't very prominent and some otherwise enthusiastic members are likely to have skipped it.

What do these changes consist of? One indication is that 24% said they were going to give to our top recommended causes in the future¹ when they weren't planning to before. Assuming non-reporters didn't change, that means **10% of total new members switched to giving some proportion of their money to the most cost-effective organisations**, which is in line with the 14% making a significant or complete change.

Member tracking

Self-reports are likely to be inaccurate, so can we do a quick sense check? Of the 21 people who responded to the joining survey, what kinds of changes did they make? 6 (24%) of these were reported as 'significant' or 'complete' changes. 12 (57%) reported 'small' or 'some' change. 2 more said they didn't know. Looking at the cases individually, **I'd characterise 10 (48%) as having some evidence for a change in terms of impact.** There were 2 more people who self-report significant changes but I don't know them. This is significantly more than the self-reports. This could be partly because small changes (e.g. of which charity to donate to) actually reflect very large changes in impact, but it's not seen this way by new members. On the other hand, this may be an overestimate because it doesn't reflect the chances of unforeseen new influences reversing our changes.

Here are the stories that involved changes:

1. We encouraged A to direct money to Givewell recommendations and gave them some tools for comparing their options. A gives \$5k annually and runs a

¹ Givewell or GWWC recommendations, global catastrophic risk, EAA recommendations, meta-charity

social enterprise that could direct significant amounts of money. We've arranged a follow up session to discuss more in the new year.

2. B (Oxford) discovered us and GWWC on the careers service website, they had vague plans to do Earning to Give, but now has stronger intentions and intends to donate to our top recommendations, which they didn't know about before. B plans to do an internship at CEA.
3. C (Oxford) weighed up potential options in the area of urban planning, and chose to go into policy where they could affect far more people
4. D (Oxford) wants to do philosophy research relating to global catastrophic risk, but is going to test out Earning to Give this summer in case they're better suited to funding such research. They have been helped one-on-one and by several members to find the high earning job that most suits them and to apply to it.
5. E (Oxford) wanted to make an impact through policy, we introduced them to lots of new career options one-on-one, and encouraged them to think seriously about effectiveness differences. They also plan to donate more and to give to GWWC recommendations. They have started volunteering for CEA.
6. F (Cambridge) started to consider pursuing Earning to Give in finance, studying economics or working for CEA, when before they were only considering history academia.
7. G (Oxford) started to consider a broader range of effective options after having a one-on-one, they plan to donate more and switched to our top causes
8. H (Monash) had a one-on-one, where we encouraged them to study economics, reconsider their causes and enter consulting for training, as well as create a better plan for the future. They plan to donate more and switched to our top recommendations.
9. We contributed to J's (Oxford) decision to pursue Earning to Give, and they are receiving significant help from us in planning their applications and choosing which job to take, which should ultimately boost their long-term earnings.

10. K (Princeton) intends to give more, but is unsure of how much we've influenced their career
11. L was wondering how they could best contribute to the EA movement (particularly through CFAR). They received a one-on-one where we gave him significant help thinking through issues like the discount rate, funding vs doing etc. Their decisions are still on-going and we're scheduled to talk to them again soon.
12. 2 people I don't know found us online but claim to expect 'significant' changes

In addition to improving the careers of new members, we continued to support the careers of old members:

1. M is planning to go into EtG and we've been helping them to find the optimal job for that. They also came to take global catastrophic risk seriously, after not having heard about it before, and being initially sceptical. They realised the importance of advocacy over direct giving.
2. N is a top student planning to enter development policy who we did research for on how to enter the World Bank
3. We're helping O to do grad school applications
4. P wants to work on crucial considerations around global catastrophic risk, and received a Marshall Scholarship with our help, which means they can join us in Oxford with funding

Members interest data

A significant fraction of members have publicly declared interested in high-dedication paths via their profiles e.g. 50% are considering Earning to Give. A large proportion are interested in unconventional but potentially high impact cause areas e.g. ~33% are interested in advancing prioritisation and effectiveness research, ~25% are interested in catastrophic risks and 30% are interested in ending factory farming.

Effective Animal Activism (EAA)

In addition to member outreach, we set up EAA in July: the world's first and only impact-focused evaluator of animal welfare charities.

This was achieved with very little marginal resources:

- 6 weeks of Ilan's time as an intern in the summer: £870
- 1 week of Tom's time: £330
- Training and management time for Ilan: £300
- ~3 weeks of volunteer time

We have good evidence that the project has already moved £2500 to its top recommendations, meaning the project has already earned £1,000 in profit to 80,000 Hours's impact. It has reached ~2,500 people online. In addition, it found 8 new members for 80,000 Hours (already in our figures).

Again, the vast majority of the organisation's impact should lie in the future. The project has secured enough funding for a full-time Executive Director for one year. It has received considerable interest from animal charities, who are interested in assessing themselves.

How has our delivery compared to our stated plans?

- Our initial stated aim was to focus on developing our content over the summer and to scale up outreach into the new academic year.
- Our plans turned out to be too ambitious. We didn't leave enough time to write the content, in particular for adapting our content to be focused on career advice (rather than the more campaign based brand we had previously). Over summer we invested significant time in developing our new communications approach, training our staff in it, updating the members application process and planning the new version of the website. We also had to spend more time on set up tasks, such as training our staff, developing roles for staff, setting up management processes, and finding an office. Finally, one of key staff (Niel) was ill for a month, which significantly delayed progress.

- On the other hand, we exceeded our plans over the summer in founding EAA, which demonstrated the potential of our community. We were also able to almost double web traffic.
- At the end of the summer, we created a more focused business plan. We decided to focus on online outreach and outreach in Oxford in order to iteratively test our content. This came with a new set of goals.
- We succeeded in making most of the new set of goals by the end of the period, for instance: wrote 55 blog posts, spoke to 37 people one-on-one and re-wrote the website. Our main failing was only gaining 25 members in Oxford rather than the target of 40 and missing our target to set up meet-ups.
- In other respects we exceeded our targets. In particular, we significantly developed our organisational strategy documents, staff training process and management processes. This led to having a more motivated and better coordinated team, which we realised should be one of our top priorities. Staff and interns reported 93% satisfaction with their relationship with their line manager and 85% for their levels of motivation. We significantly improved our product development process, to one focused on heavy testing and constant iteration (based on Blank's 'Customer Discovery' process and the lean start-up). We did more research into other sources of careers advice. We started recruiting more staff, and CEA already has 60 applicants.

Our Resources Over This Period

Budget 2012 exc. Dec

80,000 Hours 2012 exc. Dec	17459.388
BT salary (exc. tax)	5616.32
Interns	5647.73
Events	408.72
Technical	68.8
Sundries	351.04
RW salary (10%, exc. tax)	276.348
TA salary (30%, exc. tax)	1186.94
CEA Central*0.5	3903.49
CEA Central Breakdown	7806.98
Equipment	804.16
Legal & financial	2992.82
Office	3180
HR (Rob's flight & visa)	830

Note that the vast majority of these expenses were incurred July – Nov 2012.

Other Resources

The team consisted of:

- Myself, paid, full-time: co-Executive Director
- Niel, volunteer, 40h/week: co-Executive Director
- Tom, paid, 50%: Director of Operations
- Will, volunteer, variable: President
- 3 interns, full-time
- Key Volunteers, equivalent to 0.5-1 additional full-time intern
- Advisers: Nick Beckstead, Carl Shulman

We also started the period with a website with ~10 pages of content, 50 blog posts, login functions and members profiles